

# FURUTECH

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ADL H118 Review

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## Alpha Design Labs ADL H118

It was only going to be a matter of time before Alpha Design Labs, the consumer electronics arm of high-end cable specialist Furutech, released its own headphones.

The ADL product line-up already includes several headphone-related products, and so, the arrival of the ADL H118 comes as no surprise. In line with what we've seen from the brand thus far, these closed-back, circumaural headphones feature both a thoughtful design and quality execution.

The H118s fold up into an oval-shaped, soft-shell carrying bag that isn't exactly small, but still portable. The detachable cable features a three-pin mini-XLR connector, and a clever combination jack plug, with the 5,3 mm full-size plug unscrewing to reveal a smaller 3,5 mm minijack.

The detachable cable also means that the standard cable can be upgraded – ADL's own rhodium-plated iHP-35X mini-XLR cable is perfectly suited for



usually driving my Sennheiser HD800 reference 'phones.

The ADL H118s sound smooth and

John Hiatt's *The Open Road* features a more earthy, organic production, and a track like 'My Baby' sounded wholesome and resonant, with the timbre of Hiatt's rich vocals, and the intricate guitar riffs of Doug Lancio, brought to the fore with a pervasive sense of realism.

Finally, the compelling performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4* by the NDR Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Günter Wand sounded bold and majestic, with exceptional spatial presence and tonal breadth.

There is a lot to recommend the ADL H118 headphones. I liked their rich lower mids and power bass, and their open and revealing nature. Brighter material may end up with too much bite, and the fit (on my head) may be a bit too snug during extended listening sessions. But these are fine headphones that do good music full justice, and deserve to be matched to a decent headphone amp for optimum results.

Deon Schoeman

that very purpose.

The H118 itself is a sturdy and fairly lightweight design with unusual triangular earcups that fit snugly. The leatherette-padded earcups pivot and swivel to accommodate most head sizes and shapes and are linked by an adjustable, padded headband.

Overall comfort levels are good, although the fit is perhaps a little too close for extended, uninterrupted listening sessions.

On a technical level, the 40 mm custom dynamic drivers feature unusual, wave-patterned diaphragms, together with large, cryogenically treated high-flux magnets for the motor assembly. The coils feature copper-plated aluminium wire.

The 68 ohm impedance suggests that the H118s can be driven directly by personal music players such as the ubiquitous iPod or iPhone, and this is indeed the case. But I found that these headphones deserve better.

ADL's Cruise portable headphone amp is a good match, and H118 also sounded excellent using the ADL Esprit and Musical Fidelity X-CAN V8P headphone amps

rich, with some emphasis on the lower midrange and upper bass regions adding body and texture – a boon when listening to compressed music files that can sometimes end up sounding tinny.

Lower bass notes had both punch and presence, and were delivered with an incisive enthusiasm that provided a solid and succinctly defined foundation to the music. The progression into the mids and upper mids was unfettered by untoward emphasis, and the mids sounded clear and open.

That trend continued into the upper frequency band, where they could even sound a little bright. This certainly benefited detail retrieval, and assisted the H118s in creating a believable sense of scale and dimensions by resolving subtle and nuances.

The downside is that any recording tending towards brashness will sound too aggressive. Indeed, the often abrasive electronics of The Stereophonics on *Language. Sex. Violence. Other?* were too apparent, even though the delivery was spacious and all-enveloping.

### VITAL STATS

Type.....Circumaural  
Transducer type.....Dynamic  
Impedance.....68 ohms at 1 kHz  
Frequency response .. 20 Hz – 20 kHz  
Sensitivity ..... 98 dB SPL (1 mW/1 kHz)  
Mass.....310 g (including cable)

Price ..... R2 795

#### Verdict

Approachable yet meticulous performance from these carefully-constructed and comfortable headphones.

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OUR RATING: 76 / 100

